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TRANSPORTATION - FRANCE

THE SUPREME TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

NOTE: The following information was not available during the preparation of this study.

1. The most important development in French transportation since the war is the establishment by the National Assembly in August 1947 of a Supreme Transportation Advisory Board. The Board will advise the Minister of Public Works and Transport on all transportation matters submitted to it, but may also formulate recommendations on its own initiative. The Advisory Board's immediate mission is to present, within one year, plans for the coordination of rail, highway, inland waterway, air and ocean transportation. It will include in its plans coordination of domestic transport with colonial and international transportation. The Board will study all social, technical, financial and economic matters relative to the organization and functioning of the various modes of transportation; it will also study matters concerning stock and equipment, technical and commercial development and the social, economic and administrative problems arising therefrom.

2. The Supreme Transportation Advisory Board is established under the Minister of Public Works and Transport and consists of 69 members, including representatives from various government agencies, members of Parliament, specialists from the large transport organizations, employee representatives from the operating companies and public organizations such as tourist travel agencies. Seven permanent commissions are established under the Board, charged with examining questions of transport coordination. These are as follows:

- Rail - highway
- Rail - inland waterway
- Rail - air
- Rail - sea
- Highway - air
- Highway - inland waterway
- Sea - air

3. The Supreme Transportation Advisory Board is financed through a special fund provided by the Minister of Public Works and Transport. The sum expended shall be reimbursed to the state by the various transportation operators under conditions to be set forth by decree of the Minister of Public Works and Transport and the Minister of Finance.

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1. The French government policy of state assistance to, or ownership and control of, rail and water carriers does not extend to support of highway carriers. Rapid development of road transportation after World War I constituted a threat to the position of the railroads, in which the state already had important financial and political interests. The government felt compelled, therefore, to adopt a policy of non-support of highway transportation in order to insure pre-eminence to both rail and water carriers. The affect of this policy is demonstrated by the fact that in the years preceding the late war, road transportation accounted for only about ten percent of total traffic. There is little doubt, however, that without state assistance to the railroads, highway carriers would have acquired a much larger share of the total traffic.
2. National policy for highway transport is determined by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry of Public Works, however, exerts the principal influence. Policy affecting highways is integrated into the over-all national policy on transportation but is relegated to a subordinate position.
3. Highway transport policies are based to some degree upon strategic considerations, but not to the extent that railroad policies are affected by such considerations.
4. With the exception of road transport services operated by railroads, the motor carrier industry receives no subsidies. The state, however, maintains the highways in excellent condition.
5. Policy toward highway transportation has been adversely affected by the prime interest of the state in rail and water carriers. Highway carriers in France, as in other Western European states, must contend with the high cost of imported gasoline and deisel oil but government policy has not assisted the highway carrier in overcoming this disadvantage.

B. ORGANIZATION

1. The national highways (ROUTES NATIONALES) are administered under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, the principal Government agency dealing with all transport in France. Secondary roads are administered under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. It should be noted that while the routes are under a divided responsibility, the authority for dealing with the actual operation of the highway carriers is under the direction of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport with responsibility centered in the Department of Railroads and Transport.

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2. Under the decree of 1937 road transport problems were decentralized as far as possible by letting the various departments (i.e., state) assume responsibility for administrative functions wherever possible. The Ministry, however, retains the power to grant licenses, without which it is impossible to operate since the licenses deal with such matters as scope of operations, rates, schedules and other vital operational matters. It should be noted that such licenses under the decree were to expire 31 December 1947.
3. See B. 1 and 2.
4. The correction of transport difficulties, both financial and administrative, brought about by the Decree of 1937, resulted in the nationalization of the railroads and a reorganization of government transport agencies. The present improvement in administration of highway transport can therefore also be attributed to the Decree. It is not known whether consideration is being given to reorganization of present agencies. It is possible that such action might be undertaken in view of the present agitation for nationalization of highway transport, but there is little evidence as yet.
5. The highway carriers are considered to be operating in the public interest and have received considerable praise for the part which they have played in alleviating the rail burden since the end of the war.

C. ADMINISTRATION

1. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport has complete authority over establishment of new motor transport lines and formulates procedures to be followed in this respect.
3. Competition between road transport and other media of transport is not fostered by the Government. Highway transport operators are not government assisted as are water and rail carriers, and such progress as has been made in road transportation has been largely despite state indifference. Competition is permitted by the State to a limited extent but policy denies duplication of facilities not shown to be in the public interest.
5. In contrast to the definite interest which the state takes in training technicians for rail and water transport, there is little interest shown in training technicians in highway transportation. This is largely due to the government policy of promoting rail and waterway facilities and relegating highway transportation to a secondary role.
6. Considerable work has been done by highway transport carriers to integrate French services with those of neighboring states. These inter-connecting bus services have been reestablished since the war and it is now possible to travel by omnibus from

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France to Belgium, the Netherlands or Sweden. There are no international highway transport associations of any importance in Europe and the French Government has shown little interest in promoting French international highway services.

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